

# *The Heterodyne*

*Newsletter of the West Valley Amateur Radio Association*

**December Meeting at the  
Red Cross Building  
WVARA Holiday BBQ  
Saturday, December 17  
11am - 1pm**

**Meeting Location:  
American Red Cross,  
Silicon Valley Chapter  
2731 N First Street at Plumeria Dr  
(southwest corner) in San Jose**

| WVARA Repeaters (W6PIY) |             |          |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Band                    | Frequency   | PL       |
| 6 Meters                | 52.580- MHz | 151.4 Hz |
| 2 Meters                | 147.39+ MHz | 151.4 Hz |
| 1.25 Meters             | 223.96- MHz | 156.7 Hz |
| 0.70 Meter              | 441.35+ MHz | 88.5 Hz  |
| 0.23 Meter              | 1286.2- MHz | 100 Hz   |

WVARA's club net is on the W6PIY repeaters each Tuesday at 8:30 pm. All repeaters are linked together during the net. The net control script can be found at [www.wvara.org](http://www.wvara.org) in the "On The Air" dropdown.

## ***Having Fun in the Sweepstakes SSB Contest as a Minimalist***

***By Jim Peterson, K6EI***

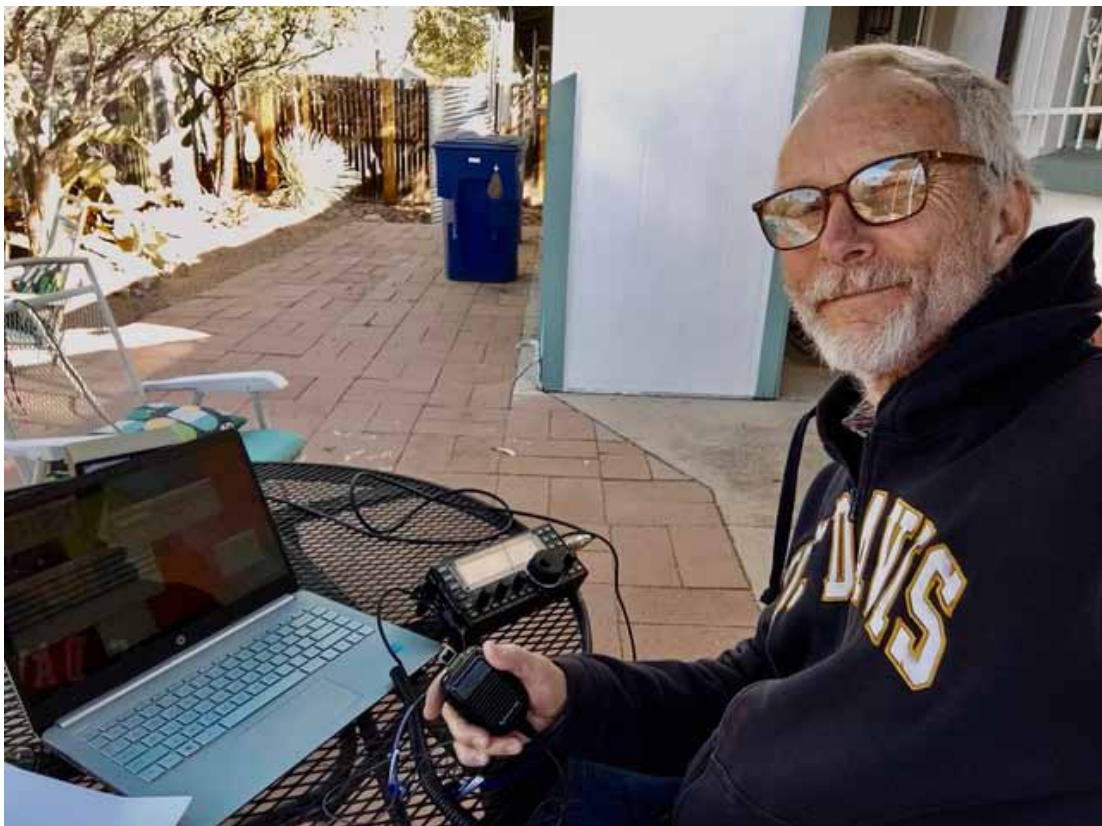
I typically prefer participating in contests via either CW or RTTY, but every once in a while it's fun to mix things up a bit. The Sweepstakes Phone Contest is always the third full weekend in November, which typically lands on the weekend before Thanksgiving -- making this a busy weekend for me that usually involves either travel to visit relatives or preparations around the house prior to the arrival of out-of-town guests. As a result, I have never taken this contest very seriously.

This year was no exception. We were preparing to visiting our younger daughter in Tucson for Thanksgiving week, but at the last minute I made a decision to not let that stop me from having fun in the contest. I stashed my Elecraft KX3 in the suitcase along with some wire and an antenna tuner.

Homes in Tucson generally don't have trees that can serve as antenna supports, and our AirBnB near my daughter's apartment was no exception. Our temporary QTH did have a small backyard with some tall shrubs in the backyard, so I used the wire to make a pair of dipoles (cut for 20 and 40 meters) that I temporarily draped over the scrubby bushes in the backyard. My portable antenna was up between 6- and 8 feet above the ground. The dipole legs were connected to my antenna tuner which was up about five feet in the vegetation.



Here's the feed point of my portable stealth antenna  
amid the shrubbery of the AirBnB's backyard



The author making contacts in the Sweepstakes  
SSB Contest via his minimalist station

After getting my stealth antenna in place, I set up my little transceiver on the patio. Since I don't normally operate SSB using my KX3, it took a few minutes for me to make sure that my signal was adjusted for maximum output and readability -- first by setting the compression level as aggressively as possible without distortion and making sure the mic gain was high enough without overdriving the ALC. And whenever operating QRP in a contest, I always use a calibrated external power meter to ensure that my transmitted output power is as close to 5 watts PEP as possible. (Often, the rig's display may indicate 5 watts output when the measured SSB output only 2- or 3 watts PEP.)

Obviously, the priority of our trip was to spend time with our daughter. But I still managed to make some Sweepstakes contacts Saturday evening, early Sunday morning, and again after Sunday lunch.

As most of you already know, operating QRP/SSB with a yagi on a tower during Field Day from Mora Hill each June is a challenge. Operating the Sweepstakes SSB Contest with 5 watts and a low dipole was even more challenging. There was clearly no point in my calling CQ. Instead, I focused on Search & Pounce -- skimming each band looking for the strongest CQs where I might have a chance of being heard.

QRP contesting requires patience and perseverance. If there were other stations responding to a CQer, I knew there was little point in attempting to join the fray until the everyone else had already been worked. And of course there was the not uncommon frustration of having the op give up trying to copy my exchange after a couple attempts. This just builds character for the QRP operator.

Forty meters was largely an exercise in futility -- too many signals crowded in a narrow band with significant static. Given my low dipole, contacts on that band were largely limited to the local region via NVIS (Near Vertical Incidence Skywave) propagation. Fortunately, daytime action on 10- and 15 meters was far more fruitful. When those bands are open, even 5 watts and a low dipole are adequate to make East Coast contacts. I was especially aware of "spotlight mode" propagation on 10 meters, where I would have multiple strong two-way contacts with say Illinois or Florida but no else. Then that region would fade away and somewhere else would come in strong. It was important to complete these contacts quickly, since a signal that was 5 by 9 might quickly fade to nothing in a few seconds. My QSO total for the contest was 43 with 28 sections.

Bottom line: I definitely didn't break any records, but I had a good time, enjoyed the challenge of trying to be heard, and probably improved my operating skill a bit as well.





## **WVARA Holiday BBQ**

**When: 11am – 1pm, Saturday, Dec 17**

**Where: Silicon Valley Red Cross Building Patio on the east-facing side of the facility. We can shift indoors to Room 3 if it rains. The Red Cross building is at 2731 N. First Street at Plumeria Drive (southwest corner) in San Jose. If you haven't been to the Red Cross in a while, "talk-in" is usually available on the Association's repeaters. Best choice would be 2m/220.**

**There won't be an evening WVARA meeting in December. Instead, we are having a Holiday BBQ. We'll have hot charcoal and condiments — please bring your own meat to grill, and maybe a desert or side dish to share.**

**And of course, the WVARA tradition of a Holiday Raffle is good to go. Santa Claus is making arrangements for some great door prizes — including a donated (used) Hex Beam for 6/10/12/15/17/20. So be there or be square!**

**– Jim, K6EI**

| Upcoming Meetings and Events |                           |                                    |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Dec 17                       | HOLIDAY PARTY / BBQ       |                                    |
| Jan 11                       | Kaitlyn Handelman, KN6MAN | Satellite hacking for fun & profit |
| Jan 27-29                    | WINTER FIELD DAY          |                                    |

# WVARA Net Check-Ins (W6PIY)

Tuesdays at 8:30 PM

| Date         |         | 11/15/22  | 11/22/22  | 11/29/22  | 12/06/22  | 12/13/22  |
|--------------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Total</b> |         | <b>17</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> |
| AF6AE        | Bill    | X         | X         | X         | X         | X         |
| AJ6LG        | Jeff    | X         |           |           |           |           |
| K6CES        | Chuck   | X         |           |           |           |           |
| K6EI         | Jim     | X         |           |           |           | X         |
| K6QFO        | Mike    |           |           |           |           | X         |
| K6VP         | Dan     | X         | X         |           | X         | X         |
| KC6ZKT       | Steve   | X         |           | X         | X         | X         |
| KE6VKR       | David   |           | X         | X         | X         |           |
| KF6EMB       | Svend   | X         |           | X         | X         | X         |
| KG6HRL       | Colleen | X         |           |           |           |           |
| KK6HPF       | Ross    | X         | X         | X         | X         | X         |
| KK6VF        | Kevin   |           | NET       | NET       | NET       | NET       |
| KN6FGH       | Tim     | X         | X         | X         | X         | X         |
| KN6GOD       | Mike    |           | X         |           |           |           |
| KN6MTI       | Jim     |           |           |           | X         |           |
| KX6B         | Dick    | X         |           |           | X         | X         |
| NU6P         | John    |           |           |           |           | X         |
| W6BG         | Max     | X         |           | X         | X         |           |
| W6ESL        | Tom     | X         |           | X         | X         | X         |
| W6IA         | Mark    | X         |           | X         | X         | X         |
| W6MNL        | Steve   |           |           |           |           | X         |
| W6PK         | Phil    |           |           | X         |           |           |
| W8RJL        | Ron     |           | X         | X         | X         | X         |
| W9KKN        | Bill    | X         |           |           |           |           |
| WB6JHI       | Steve   | X         | X         |           |           | X         |
| WB6JMR       | Mark    |           |           | X         | X         |           |
| WB6KHP       | Dave    | NET       | X         | X         | X         | X         |
| WR3K         | Greg    |           | X         |           |           |           |

## **2022 WVARA Board**

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